

Defense Distribution Depot Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: a Study in Customer Service

United States military installations around the country, and even across the globe, have much in common. One would expect that. Tinker Air Force Base, outside Oklahoma City, Oklahoma is in many ways much like any other installation. Tinker, as it is commonly known, occupies some five thousand acres a few miles southwest of Oklahoma City. Tinker isn't the largest base in the system, nor is it the one with the highest population.

Distinctions of size go to Barstow, California (Marine Corps and Army - 641 thousand acres) and China Lake (Navy - 1.1 million acres). In addition, Fort Greely and Fort Wainwright (both in Fairbanks, Alaska) occupy some 1.5 million acres. In terms of employment, there are several installations with high levels of employment, both civilian and military.

The Naval Station, Norfolk, Virginia, for example, counts 55 thousand employees, most of which are servicemen and women. Fort Hood, Texas comes close to that record with 48 thousand, followed by Camp Lejeune, North Carolina with 44 thousand mostly military employees. Fort Meade, Maryland has 38 thousand mostly civilian employees. Fort Campbell, Tennessee has 26.5 thousand, with 23 thousand civilians. Tinker Air Force Base (AFB), then, with its total population of 25 thousand mostly civilian employees ranks right up there with other major installations.

In countryside that certainly is a symbolic representation of the West, Tinker has another distinction. Tinker AFB is named after Major General Clarence L. Tinker, a full-blooded native American of the Osage Nation. Tinker grew up near Pawhuska, Oklahoma and worked in the print shop of his father's newspaper, the Wah-Sha-She News, which he founded and published. In addition, Tinker attended two Indian schools, an Osage Nation boarding school in Pawhuska and the Haskell Institute, a well-known Indian school in

Lawrence Kansas.

A sprawling complex of buildings and airfields, the Tinker AFB of today, probably bears little resemblance to the Air Depot of years ago. One thing that is definitely different is that employees who provide typical depot supply support are now employees of the Defense Logistics Agency. Defense Distribution Depot Oklahoma City, Oklahoma was created, of course, in the wake of the 1990 Defense Management Review Decision 902. The transition took place over several years beginning in 1992 and ending in 1995.

From outside the Distribution system, one might have the impression that one depot is much like another. In reality, though, depot support has become more and more focused

over the years as each depot has evolved in a particular way to support its specific customers. In other words, each depot has unique qualities and properties forged by the needs of the customers it supports. The more the depot understands and responds to the needs of its customers, the more seamless is the support which is provided. DDOO is an example of a Defense Distribution Center depot's



seamless support.

Having said all of that, exactly what kind of mission and customers does DDOO support? One of the prime customers of DDOO is the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center, one of five such centers run by the Air Force Materiel Command. Its main facility is the mile-long Building 3001, where much of the varied aircraft maintenance mission is performed.

As one might guess from the missions located at Tinker AFB, providing distribution support to this wide array of activities is not a simple task. DDOO's Central Receiving receives a variety of materiel every day. Included in those receipts might be new receipts purchased in bulk, as well as locally purchased items or small items. In addition, less traditional materiel might be bulk receipts of aircraft engines

destined for rebuild or repair at one of the Tinker facilities, wing flaps, elevators or ray domes. Receipts could also include items such as uniforms, household goods and cups and anything else used on refurbished aircraft. Much of what is received at DDOO is received from carriers such as FedEx, UPS or RPS and put into storage. The remainder of what is received (18,000 items) is issued direct from Receiving to the customer. In addition to that which is going into storage or issued direct to the customer, DDOO also receives equipment turn-ins. As far as "Issues" are concerned, some of what is issued from DDOO goes in consolidated shipments to off base customers. The rest is issued to individual customers, both off and on base.

In addition to the workload which has been defined for some time, there is now an influx of work expected as the F100 workload transitions from Kelly AFB in Texas to Tinker. This transfer is occurring as a result of the pending closure of Kelly in a Base Realignment action. Jim Keeton, Receiving Branch Chief related how critical speedy support to the F100 mission is. "Sometimes the customer, who has visibility that the materiel is due in here at DDOO, will send some people over to help us speed up the process. We do everything we can to expedite processing," knowing that the customer is waiting specifically for this item. DDOO hits a high mark for receipts processed annually, receiving more line items than any other depot in the system.

Storage at DDOO also presents an interesting problem. With the Air Refueling Wing located at Tinker, refueling booms, the means for refueling jet aircraft while in the air, are received, stored, overhauled and issued at Oklahoma City. They are large, irregularly shaped pieces of essential equipment that must be protected throughout the entire depot storage, issue and transportation process.

The size, shape and variety of parts stored at DDOO is part of what makes its operation different than almost any other depot. As you travel the main corridor of Building 3001, there

are bulk packages of sheet aluminum which are being used to replace worn-out segments of air plane fuselages or wings. In addition, there are individual engine rotors and electronics in special packaging used to ensure safe transport due to its fragility factor. There are stabilizers for the B-1 Bomber.



There are engines both in "cans" and out. There are wings.

Then there is the problem of what's left over after airplane repairs and refurbishments are complete. Whatever is not in condition to go back on the aircraft must either be sent to a contractor for re-work or turned in.

Ron Jolly, Branch Chief in the Small and Medium Bulk Storage Branch explained that, "Two level maintenance is what drives operations at DDOO. Some engines or equipment are received at DDOO that only need to be repaired. These items need to be repaired and be back in the field as soon as possible. Other items require complete repair or rebuild." A third category of items are those which the customer has decided should no longer be repaired, should be disposed of. This scenario has impacts for storage. The same type of engine could be found in several locations: inside storage, under protective wrap in sheds, outside storage for disposal items. Navy engines pose yet a third scenario, since they require special preservation and packaging and are stored in "cans" outside.

This means that any engine arriving at DDOO has to be evaluated for what kind of storage is needed. Automated records, which are available for each engine, tell its history and specify whether it should go to building 3001 for repair and test or to Building 3703 for maintenance, preservation and packaging. The transportation of engines is a major effort, as well. A widely varying quantity of jet engines might be received on any given day. DDOO is in the process of consolidating engines being stored in multiple locations to one. This will help to reduce on depot transportation, which is



accomplished through the use of tug-trains.

In addition to jet engines, there is communications gear, antennas, towers, chemical support to Air Force Maintenance operations, hydraulic stands for aircraft repair and hundreds of refueling booms per month. Chemicals are in open, roofed storage with dikes for chemical containment in the event of a spill.

Clearly DDOO's largest customer is the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center, which accounts for a significant part of DDOO's business. Much of that is a result of the tremendous Preservation, Packaging and Marking workload of the center. Parts are received to be repaired, overhauled, preserved and packed. Non-serviceable parts go to the on site Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office for disposal. "Most parts received at DDOO are in high demand with narrow delivery time frames. The majority of work at DDOO is high priority work, and,

for us at DDOO, high priority means that work is accomplished in four to eight hours. One day processing is not enough to satisfy our customer," reports Bill Watkins, Deputy Commander at DDOO. "Jet engines are rebuilt here for the majority of aircraft flown [by the Department of Defense] today...and heavy aircraft require heavy parts." Aircraft skins, wingtips, pumps, tires.

Though workload trends at many depots are in a downward glidepath, there has been a slight growth in DDOO's workload over the past seven years. In fact, said Watkins, "The Air Force's Lean Logistics (the stockage of the lowest possible levels of spare parts) has actually contributed to DDOO's steady, if moderate, workload increase. One other trend does hold steady, too, and that is the declining numbers of employees and the increasing average age of government workers. In spite of these trends, DDOO's record of supporting its customers is excellent.

Bill Watkins attributes DDOO's excellent performance overall with generally good relations with workers and unions.

The most dramatic recent changes in depot operations, says Warehousing Division Chief, Darrell Perkins, have taken place in the warehousing arena. Among those changes are moving active items closer to shipping; rewarehousing into more effective storage configurations; creating new storage space to accommodate new work being received for customers. Probably the most difficult task being asked of Warehousing personnel is to take on any additional workload with no increases in personnel.

Perkins explained some of the warehousing challenges. While it is important to receive certain items in a centralized location, the type of materiel being received warrants a flexible means of dealing with it. For example, when

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Missions Supported by DDOO at Tinker Air Force Base

The Air Logistics Center:

Directorate of Aircraft provides management and maintenance support for the B-2, B-1 and E-3 aircraft in addition to several missile systems. They are responsible for repair, modification, overhaul and functional flight check of B-1, B-52, C-135 and E-3 aircraft as well as repair of the Navy's E-6 aircraft. The C/KC-135 Management Directorate supports eight major commands, the Navy, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, France and Turkey. The Propulsion Directorate manages and maintains more than 18,000 aircraft engines for nine commands, including the F101, F108, F110, F118, TF30, TF33, TF41, J33, J57, J58, T64, F107 and F112 aircraft.

The Commodities Directorate overhauls and repairs engine, avionics and airframe accessories, constant speed drives, oxygen equipment, bearings, environmental controls and air-driven accessories. They work with life support equipment, parachutes, fuel cell bladders, electrical cable, sheet metal, fiber optics and advanced composite materials. In addition, the Directorate works with hydraulics, pneumatics, flight and engine instruments, inertial navigation systems and automatic flight control systems. They also direct annual repair, overhaul and manufacture more than 575 thousand aircraft and jet engine components.

B-52 Management Directorate is in the process of modernizing the B-52 to adapt it to changing missions.

552nd Air Control Wing operates most of the Air Force's E-3 fleet as an integral part of Air Combat Command and DoD operations. The wing oversees and coordinates logistical, combat support and program requirements for three unique weapons systems in the Air Force inventory. E-3, EC-135, and C-135 aircraft. The 552nd is the main operating unit for the Air Force's E-3 Sentry aircraft.

The Navy's Take Charge and Move Out (TACAMO) mission is located at Tinker.

The 507th Air Refueling Wing is located at Tinker and is a reserve unit designed to augment the active duty force as needed.

Ten steps for the 'A-76ed'

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The buzzwords in government news these days are disturbing—outsourcing . . . base closures . . . A-76 . . . privatization . . . Here are some typical e-mails I get from scared and nervous federal employees:

"Kathryn,

So many installations within DoD are being 'A-76ed' and my workplace is no exception. Current management in my workplace does not put any value on education achievements or degrees conferred upon an individual and we're getting ready to reorganize again—how can I make myself more competitive in this environment? What is a 'win-win' way to handle this situation?"

"Kathryn,

In the Department of Defense, deep budget cuts, downsizing, reorganizations, analysis of core functions, business process reengineering and RIFs have taken their toll on employee morale and organizational efficiency. The story isn't change, it's here and now. What should I do first, second and third to keep a job and my sanity?"

"Kathryn,

I've been jerked around long enough, with innuendos and rumors. What should I do to get ready in case a reduction-in-force really does occur in my agency in the very near future?"

I think it's time to get ready to look for another job, just in case. The writing is on the wall, as they say. Here is a list of 10 action steps for the "A-76ed":

Research:

1. If your organization is competing with contractors, find out who the contracting companies are. Look them up

on the Internet. Ask questions about their employment requirements. It's possible that you might have to work for them instead of the government. I know that's not a first choice, but you do need to pay the mortgage.

2. Look up the employment advertisements on the contractors' Web sites. Find the job advertisements for your job (or what could be your job). Print out the advertisements. Read them for the key words and duties and responsibilities. You're going to need this language when you write and update your federal resume.

3. Start looking up federal jobs on the Internet right away. Start looking at the duties and responsibilities and the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) requirements. Find agencies located in your region and look for jobs that are available. Even if you're not ready to apply right now, start reading, thinking and gathering data. Print the job vacancies.

4. Find out what kind of resume format you need in your region. You might need an electronic, or Resumix, format for Navy, Air Force or Army regions. If you're applying to other government agencies, you'll need the federal resume format.

5. Consider my book, *The Federal Resume Guidebook*, or any other resource on resume writing—electronic or other. Converting your SF-171 into a resume is a writing challenge that can take 20 to 40 hours, depending on your dedication to the project. Don't get depressed, just get ready to spend the time. This is your next career.

Compile and Update:

6. Dig out your SF-171, position descriptions, evaluations, letters of commendation, resumes and anything on paper about your career accomplishments.

7. Start updating. Start a new word processing file and write in all of the updated information that is not in your current SF-171 or resume. You do not need to use a particular format at this time; just start writing the updates. The updates should include additional positions (and all of the details required by government), training, awards, details, presentations, publications.

Write Your Resume:

8. Write a draft of your new resume. Write the resume before you find the perfect announcement. You might have

to write more than one version. You might need a 5-page Navy Resumix resume and a 3-page Army resume and a federal resume for other agencies. I'm not kidding. There are several versions of resumes in government now!

9. Get a friend or an editor to critique and review your resume.

10. Keep your eyes and ears open in case the time is near to start searching for a new position. If you wait until the announcement arrives, you will be worried, stressed and unable to capably handle the task of writing a competitive, professional and positive resume.

You will land on your feet if you're prepared. Get help if you need it. Change will occur whether you're ready or not. I hope this list helps. My Web site could help too. Visit it when you have time at www.resume-place.com.

Kathryn Kraemer Troutman is the author of four books on resume writing, she is a popular and highly-motivating trainer in government and civilian military organizations, and is an avid Web site producer and communicator. Kathryn's main site, www.resume-place.com, was first published in 1995. Kathryn has been an entrepreneur for 28 years and has 3 college-age children. The Career Corner column is dedicated to encouraging readers to take control of their careers and their future.

Ten Steps for the A-76'ed:

1. Who are the players?

2. What jobs are being advertised?

3. What Federal jobs are available?

4. What kind of resume can be used?

5. Read resume guides.

6. Gather material from your files.

7. Polish your SF-171 for Federal Applications

8. Draft a resume.

9. Have a colleague or mentor critique the resume.

10. Keep your eyes and ears open.